The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas is committed to maintaining an environment free of abuse of children and youth and of sexual exploitation and harassment of adults in its churches, schools, and institutions. It is a commitment the Diocese requires of all ministers of the Church, lay and ordained, to make and uphold.

*Safeguarding God’s Children*’s purpose is to increase awareness of child abuse and show how perpetrators of sexual abuse gain access to and groom children and youth. The ultimate goal of SGC is to protect our children and youth from sexual abuse.

*Safeguarding God’s People* intends to raise awareness to the problems and causes of sexual exploitation and sexual harassment in the Church and ways to prevent them in our ministries and Diocesan workplaces. The Church must be a safe place for all people; a place of respect, trust and caring.
Age Categories
1. A child is defined as anyone under the age of 12 years.
2. A youth is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years or older, but still in high school.
3. A vulnerable adult is defined as anyone 18 years or older who has special needs of a physical, age-related or mental nature and participates in activities for children and youth.
4. An adult for the purposes of this policy is defined as anyone who is 18 years or older.

Code of Conduct

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or to allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth before agreeing to abide by them and continuing in service to the church.

Persons who cannot agree to adhere to these policies are not allowed to serve in ministry to children and youth.

The Code of Conduct for Protection of Children and Youth

- Church Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with The Policies for General Conduct with Children and Youth as defined in The Diocesan Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with The Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth.
- Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.
- In the event that Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, Church Personnel agree to immediately report their observations as outlined in this policy.
11. Church Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet or hand held device to view or
download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children
and youth.
12. Church Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams
and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as
pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.

13. Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags or tents with
other children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of one of the children
or youth in the bed, sleeping bag or tent. An adult may sleep in the same hotel room with no
fewer than three (3) other children, providing adult and all children are of the same sex. The
adult must sleep alone in a bed or on a cot or rollaway bed. The adult must never be alone
with a child. The adult will use the bathroom facilities alone, dressing/undressing in the
bathroom with the door closed and with no children present. Exception to the above is given if
any of the children are related to the adult, in which case, the adult may sleep in the same bed
with a child who is an immediate family member. It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep
in one open space such as a parish hall or camp lodge with children and youth. A best practice
rule is no situation in which one adult is alone with one child unless they are immediate family
members.

14. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing or showering in the
presence of children or youth.

15. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior
management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This
prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force. Physical
force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or
to a child, youth or others.

16. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, profanity, degrading punishment,
or any mechanical restraint for behavior management.

17. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing
activities or behaviors which could be construed as hazing.

Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth

The Diocese of West Texas is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment
for our children and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Church
Personnel from misunderstandings. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and which are
inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet
identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children and youth. The guidelines
are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to “groom”
children, youth and their parents for future abuse.

The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with
children and youth.
Monitoring and Supervision of Programs

Supervisory personnel and others should monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth and other children with children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped.

The behaviors and interactions of persons with children and youth that need to be monitored and supervised are covered below and in the section on Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth.

1. Every program for children and youth must meet established ratios for adults and children. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises. These ratios are found in Appendix E.

2. Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them.

3. Church Personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise Church Personnel younger than 21 and be physically present during all activities.

4. No person will be permitted to supervise an immediate family member unless another non-related adult is present. An immediate family member is defined as the spouse, parent, child, sibling, grandparent, partner or co-habitant. This also applies to in-law and step family relationships. Related personnel may minister together as long as an unrelated adult is present.

5. An up-to-date list of approved congregation-sponsored programs for children and youth will be maintained in the church office or other place where church records are kept.

6. Church Personnel are not permitted to develop new activities for children and youth without approval from the rector or canonical equivalent. Requests to develop new activities should be submitted in writing to the rector or canonical equivalent. The rector or canonical equivalent will assure that any activity includes adequate adult supervision.

7. Each program will follow age-appropriate procedures to insure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths. These procedures are found in Appendix F.

8. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.

9. At least two unrelated Church Personnel must supervise activities. When both boys and girls are participating in overnight activities or activities away from the church or school, male and female chaperones must be present.

10. When transporting children in vehicles, two unrelated adults must be in each vehicle unless the group is organized into a caravan, during which all vehicles are in sight of another vehicle in the caravan. It is suggested that cell phones be available in each car and a list of names and contact numbers be provided to each driver.
Responding to Problems

Reporting of Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations with Children or Youth

When Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with Children and Youth, or which may violate any provision of The Diocesan Policies for Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse, they must immediately report their observations as instructed below.

Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would include:
* seeking private time with children or youth
* taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults
* swearing or making suggestive comments to children or youth
* selecting staff or volunteers without the required screening and Safeguarding God's Children training.

Such inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported immediately in one of the following ways:
1. A telephone call or meeting with the rector or canonical equivalent, head of school or executive director of the diocesan institution. Notification may also be made to the Canon to the Ordinary in the Bishop's office.
2. A telephone call or meeting with the Canon to the Ordinary in the Bishop's office if the complaint is against the rector or canonical equivalent, head of school or executive director of the diocesan institution.
3. A Notice of Concern, signed or unsigned, sent to the Bishop. (Appendix B)

➢ Any person receiving a report of inappropriate behavior or possible violation of these policies shall immediately inform the Bishop or the Canon to the Ordinary.

➢ All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously.

The Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary receive reports. These persons may be reached in the

Bishop's office: Diocese of West Texas
111 Torcido Drive, San Antonio, TX 78209
Telephone (210/888) 824-5387
Bishop's Office fax (210) 824-1312

Reporting of Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth

All Church Personnel are required by this policy and by the laws of the State of Texas to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the police or to Child Protective Services, as noted in Appendix D.

Reports to Child Protective Services (CPS) may be made in either of the following ways:
• Call the toll-free 24 hour, 7 days a week, nationwide abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400
• Report through CPS secure website (you will receive a response within 24 hours: www.txabusehotline
• Email reports are not accepted.
Confidential Notice of Concern

Who is the complaint about? ____________________________________________

Date of Notice: _____________ Congregation: _____________________________

Type of Concern: _____________________________________________________

  ____ Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth  ____ Policy violation with a child or youth
  ____ Reason to believe abuse occurred/is occurring  ____ Other __________________________

Describe the situation:

What happened? ____________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

When did it happen? ____________________________

Was anyone else present? ____________________________

Has it ever happened before? ____________________________

Was it reported to the authorities? ___Yes ___ No

If reported, to whom? ____________________________

What action was taken? ____________________________

Follow-up:

Does anyone else need to be notified? ____________________________

Would you like someone to call you to discuss the situation? ___ Yes ___ No

(If yes, be sure to give contact information below.)

Optional Information:

Name ____________________________ Telephone ____________________________

Address ____________________________

Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

*Once completed, please fax to the confidential fax line in the Bishop’s office: 210-824-1312 or mail to: The Bishop of West Texas, PO Box 6885, San Antonio, TX 78209